



NEWS

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Katrina "evacuees" to receive additional opportunities to join, switch Medicare plans

Individuals deemed evacuees of Hurricane Katrina will be given a special enrollment period (SEP) allowing them more time to enroll in or change their Medicare prescription plans in 2006, according to officials with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

To be considered eligible for this SEP, an "evacuee" of Hurricane Katrina must have been a resident of any of the zip codes declared as meeting the level of "individual assistance" by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at the time of the hurricane in August 2005.

To determine which parishes qualify, type in the following link located on FEMA's Web site: www.fema.gov/news/disasters.fema?year=2005 and select "*Major Disaster Declarations*" and "*Number 1603*" for Hurricane Katrina. The list of affected parishes qualifying for "individual assistance" can be found under the "*Designated Counties*" link.

CMS officials say this special enrollment period means that Hurricane Katrina evacuees will be able to join and switch plans, including Medicare prescription drug plans, at any time through December 31, 2006.

To determine SEP eligibility, Medicare plans must first attempt to obtain proof (driver's license, utility bill, etc.) that the individual resided in an affected zip code. If no such proof is available, the plan must accept the beneficiary's attestation that he or she resided in an affected zip code.

Individuals needing additional information can contact the Louisiana Department of Insurance Senior Health Insurance Information Program at 1-800-259-5301.